

1965 WAR

Army Aviation

1965 War

Major General Muhammad Azam (retired)
&
Major Aamir Cheema (retired)

Account of Pakistan Army Aviation in 1965War

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17 DAYS OF SEPTEMBER 1965

CASUS BELLI

At 0300 hours on 6th September Indians delivered a riposte and launched attack across the international border towards Lahore. Indians aim was to divert our focus from Akhunr and make Pakistan react to this new situation. This move was not a surprise. Indian attack on 6th September, was well anticipated by our higher headquarters.1 Corps had already informed formations under its command to be prepared to deploy at short notice, troops were dispersed by first light 2nd September. 15 Division was already ordered to take up defensive positions on 3rd September 1965. The events of last 9 months had prepared Pakistan for such eventuality.

PAKISTAN ARMY DISPOSITIONS

On the eve of war Pakistan Army was commanded by General Musa Khan

1 Corps (Army had only one corps at that time)

Corps Headquarters at Gujranwala Lieutenant General Bakhtiar Rana

7 Division at Jallalpur. Major General
Yahya Khan

15 Division at Sialkot. Brigadier Ismail
{Later Major General Tikka }

6 Armour Division at Daska. Major General
Abrar Hussain Malik

(It had only one armour brigade)

General Headquarters' Formations

11 Division at Kasur. Major General Hamid

10 Division at Lahore. Major General Sarfraz

12 Division at Murree Major General
Akhtar Ali Malik

1st Armour Division at Raiwind. Major
General Nasir

18 Division in Sind. Major General Azhar

4 Corps Artillery. Brigadier Amjad

INDIAN ARMY - ORDER OF BATTLE (ORBAT)

The Indian Army had eleven divisions and three independent brigades. Senior Indian officers were:-

Chief of Army Staff - General J.N. Chaudhry
Western Command Lieutenant General Harbaksh Singh

1 Corps -Lieutenant General P.O. Dunn {Sialkot Sector}.

1 Armoured Division, 14 Division, 16 Division and 26 Division,

XI Corps -Lieutenant General J.S. Dhillon {Lahore Sector}.

4 Mountain Division, 7 -15 Infantry Division, and 2 Independent Armoured Brigade.

XV Corps Lieutenant General K.S. Katcock {Kashmir}

6 Mountain Division, 10 and 11 Infantry Division.

Reserves. 19-25-26 Infantry Divisions, 68 Independent Infantry Brigade and 121 Independent Infantry Brigade.

Note: Indians did not have independent Air Arm for army, they had few Auster aircraft and helicopters for Artillery Fire Observation but they were all manned and controlled by IAF.

Birds Eye View of the War

The September War was mainly fought in Lahore-Kasur-Sialkot Sector with subsidiary efforts taking place in Sulemanki and Kashmir Sectors. Kashmir remained relatively calm with fighting for passes and posts in a prolonged time frame. War had three distinct phases:

Phase 1 (6-8 September 1965)

Indian X1 Corps mounted three-pronged offensive on 50 miles, Lahore - Kasur Sector. Indian 15, 7 and 4 Division launched the attacks, which were all blunted by our 10 and 11 Divisions. Indians also launched simultaneous attack towards Sialkot Sector. Own forces remained in defensive posture and some bold acts coupled with luck ensured that Indian attack should run out of the steam after 48 hours. Own 105 Brigade launched attack and captured Indian posts in Suleimanke Sector.

Phase 2 (8-12 September 1965)

Pakistan riposte with the rolling off of 1st Armoured Division poised for Amritsar, its initial success was heartening. Indians responded by employing elements of their strike force, the 1st Armoured Division in the Sialkot Sector, where own 15 Division and 6 Armoured Division {only two tank regiments} held the fort, at times outcome hanging by thread.

Phase 3 (13-17 September 1965)

Fierce tank battles raged in Philloura - Chawinda area. The attacker (Indian Forces) throwing in every

thing and the defender (Pakistani Forces) holding every inch. Own 1st Armoured Division was also rushed in there, from Kasur Sector. In the dying moments of the war, Indians made moves to recapture lost territories in Kasur, Sulemanki and desert area without success.

ARMY AVIATION

Army Aviation at that stage consisted of a base headquarter and three squadrons - 1, 2 & 3 Army Aviation Squadrons. The entire Army Aviation had an integrated maintenance & logistic support, consisting of 199 Aviation Electrical Mechanical Engineers Battalion, and an Ordnance Depot. Colonel A B Awan was commanding the Dhamial Base, in the last days of the war, he was posted to command Artillery Brigade and was replaced by Colonel Jabbar. On the onset of the war Army Aviation did not possess the capability of night operations, it also lacked the requisite communication sets to act as Forward Air Controller and neither it had any aerial fire power. All aviation resources to field formations were controlled by the Chief of General Staff{CGS}.There were total of 63 pilots available including those performing staff work as well. Three OH-13(S) helicopters were unserviceable due to non availability of spares.

With the Indian invasion of Pakistan on night 5/6 September 1965, in Wagah area, the entire complexion changed resulting in fresh deployment of the fleet of army aircraft. This move was in conjunction with the move of certain field formations.

1 Army Aviation Squadron - Lieutenant Colonel M.M. Mahmood- In support of 6, 7 and 15 Division.

The squadron supported the operations in Sialkot Sector, its flights were located at Sialkot, Adamke, Pasrur and Gujrat. During the course of battle in this Sector the flights shifted their locations. Company of 199 Electrical Mechanical Engineers Battalion was located at Sambrial to support the Squadron.

2 Army Aviation Squadron - Lieutenant Colonel Mohammad Khan. In support of 1 Corps, 1 Armoured Division, 10 and 11 Divisions. Squadron moved from Kharian to Rahwali Strip at 1845 hours 6th September, next day at 0445 hours they flew to the football ground of Government High School Gujranwala. The airstrip was prepared on the night of 6th September concealed by high trees on both sides. The mess was located in a temple

3 Army Aviation Squadron - Lieutenant Colonel Naseer Ullah Babar

The only Rotary Wing Squadron. Its two flights were detached to the Fixed Wing Squadrons, one flight remained at Dhamial to support the efforts in Azad Kashmir area.

199 Electrical Mechanical Engineers Battalion - Lieutenant Colonel Saeed Qadir. One company was located at Sambrial, other at Gujranwala, few elements were also present at Gujrat, and Multan. At Baghatanwala, Forward Base was also established, Major Aftab and Major Burki were there.

Lahore-Kasur Sector

Captain Sirajuddin of 3 Army Aviation Squadron flew General Rana, the Corps Commander from Gujranwala to Lahore and then to Kasur on the evening{1600 hours} of 6th September, in OH-13(S) helicopter. This allowed the commander to have first hand knowledge of the situation. Pilot flew low from Lahore to Kasur, the General wanted to fly as close to the forward lines as possible. Visibility was not that clear, however they could see the smoke and fire enroute. Pilot recalls“My main concern was own artillery fire. We were not in communication with the ground troops, further more in case of crash it would have been a great loss to lose the commander so early. He was

carrying important documents including the Corps Operational Instructions.” They landed safely at Kasur.

2 Army Aviation Squadron’s flight under Major Taleh Mian was at Walton Airfield. Divisional Headquarters{HQ} was in the out skirts. At Lahore, on the very first day, Air OPs were to concentrate observation in area Rampur for which they were also provided with quarter inch scale map sheets. Flying was conducted at low level. On 7th September, Major Taleh Mian and Captain Jawahar were chased by the Indian aircraft. Next day Captain Ishaq faced the same scenario. For coming days pattern remained the same. For Artillery shoots pilots had to carry extra radio set for communicating with the guns. Aviators daily had to go to respective HQ for briefing and debriefing, it was a time consuming exercise. Aviation efforts were tasked by the respective Colonel Staffs.,

AVIATION SUPPORT TO 105 INFANTRY BRIGADE

This Brigade was located at Haveli and was assigned to look after the Suleimanke Head Works. The very first attack of the war on Indians was launched by this Brigade at 1830 hours on 6th September, spearheaded by 10 Punjab and 4 Punjab supported by 32 Medium Regiment. By 1850 hours Sadiqia and Jhanger Posts were captured. On 8th September at 1020 hours

brigade requested Military Operation Directorate for an Air OP Flight.

On 9th morning Captain Hamid Choudhry arrived from Lahore with his L-19 and established strip in Okara Military Dairy Farms area. On 10th September according to Brigade War Diary, they received a message from GHQ; “Use L-19 in your own area, keeping in view its limitation. No un-necessary risk.” On 14th September Captain Khalid Kamal {KK}also joined in with another L-19. Both the pilots carried out aerial surveillance and took artillery shoots. They used air bursts as well to disperse enemy infantry hiding in village. Both pilots along with maintenance crew remained at Haveli Strip till 4th October 1965.

In the Support of Mailed Fist

One flight of 2 Army Aviation Squadron was in support of 1st Armoured Division. One of the best kept secrets of the war, was the location of this Mailed Fist. Captain Zafar{ later brigadier retired} writes, “On the evening of 6th September, Major Hissam, and my self were ordered to move to Chander Airfield, in support of 1st Armoured Division. When we arrived there from Kharian in our L-19s, there was no one there except few scattered logistic elements. We again flew in search of division, to the place we were told by the staff officers. We could not locate it and came back to Chander; here

we spent the night in open with our aircraft.Next morning we were given the wake up call by the four low level Indian jets heading for Sargodha.

We hurriedly put our L-19s under trees, soon the Indians came back, I counted and they were two aircraft short,it raised our morale.We were stranded here at Chander with no communication and decided at our own to fly towards Changa Manga Forest, to locate the Armoured Division, it was not there, we remained in air for over three hours and finally landed back at Chander where we received a message to proceed to Walton.”

On 7th September 1965 own 11 Infantry Division launched attack for the capture of Khem Kharan and Valthoa. 1st FF and 6 Lancers reached Khem Karan by last light On 8th September, 6 Lancers captured Valthoa Railway Station and 24 Cavalry reached village Asal Uttar, later to fall back on orders to Leaguer at Khem Karan. In the afternoon of 8th September,Chief of the General Staff{CGS} Major General Sher Bahadur was flown from Kharian to Kasur by Captain Siraj in an OH-13.Captain Siraj had to made few landings to facilitate the CGS for update from ground commanders.There were Indian jets in the air also.The ground formations were constanly moving and changing their positions thus it was an effort to locate the desired commander,so fluid was the battle. At 2300 hours CGS and Major General Hameed flew back from Khem Karan to Luliani..It was

Captain Siraj's first nocturnal cross-country mission. He writes, "Noise of the helicopter created a lot of fire works and illuminated the battle field area. The helicopter lights were switched off completely and the tracers fired eased navigation to the destination." The helicopter later went back to Lahore.

Battle of Asal Uttar

On 9th September 1965, own Armoured Division initiated break-out across Rohi Nullah. Indians hastily occupied defensive positions around Asal Uttar & Cheema Village, the main hurdle in our thrust towards Amritsar. Advance Landing Ground {ALG} was established on the East of Rohi Nullah near Tactical Headquarters 11 Division.

Captain Zia ud din narrates: "On 9th September, myself and Major General Hamid played hide and seek with 4 Indian Hunters for nearly seven minutes. Indians were after the Bridge Head of 11 Infantry Division and 1st Armoured Division. Captain Asghar Aziz was also attached with 1st Armoured Division with his OH-13. On 9th September when the all-important battle across Rohi Nullah was about to take place he under took route reconnaissance with Lieutenant Colonel Altaf Hussain of 1st Engineers Battalion for the leading 4 Brigade along Axis Rohi Nullah. They were almost seven miles ahead of own leading tanks when three Indian tanks astride the

axis opened machine gun fire. During this sortie landings were made to check the soil and unattended Indian bridging equipment was also inspected. He further undertook a sortie with Brigadier Lumb for getting first hand information.

On the same day in the battle for Asal Uttar Village, it had been planned that 4 Armoured Brigade would out flank the Indian positions from the north west and then cut them off in the rear. 4 Cavalry led the advance but lost it's way and was duly placed on the correct axis by Major General Naseer, GOC 1st Armoured Division, from the helicopter in which he was monitoring the advance. Early in the morning Major Hissam and Captain Raza flew towards Khem Karan. They saw own tanks crossing over Rohi Nullah and few getting bogged down. They then had the radio communication with the ground troops.

Artillery 1st Armoured Division's War Diary records: "Divisional Artillery engaged targets called by Air OP, registration of some important targets was also carried by Air OP on the orders of the commander."

Landing at Khem Karan

On 10th September 4 Cavalry was at Mile Stone-32 on Kasur- Amritsar Road where it suffered heavy

losses. Enemy regained it's balance and fierce tank battles were fought.

Two L-19s piloted by Major Hissam, Captain Zafar and Captain Nouman landed at Khem Karan Strip, they reported to General Officers Commanding 11 Division and 1st Armoured Divisions. Captain Zafar writes: "Infantry had gone across the Khem Karan but tanks had been very gradual in crossing the Bridge Head. Enemy was bringing concentrated artillery fire and regular air sorties over the Bridge Head. We flew in between and engaged enemy positions with own Artillery guns. At dusk we flew back to Walton."

By 11th September own armoured attack had lost its momentum and simultaneously the reports from Pasrur Sector had forced the necessary redeployment of strike force, however, another major battle took place when Indians realizing this move, mounted an attack on 11th September whose brunt was borne by the 21 Brigade. Battlefield was kept under surveillance from dawn to dusk by the L-19s and OH-13.

Indian Counter Attack

On the morning of 12th September 1965 major Indian counter attack towards Bridge Head came in full swing. The Air OPs were in the air. Their efforts were

recorded by War Diary of 1st Armoured Division as under;

”Air OP had been flying reconnaissance missions since early morning. At 0800 hours, Air OP reported considerable vehicular traffic on Road Asal Uttar-Valtoha, targets were engaged with field and medium artillery guns.”

“At 0900 hours, some tanks were observed moving in general area Asal Uttar and were engaged by Air OP.”

“At 1000 hours Air OP reported concentration of tanks and approximately one battalion plus of infantry in general area Asal Uttar, forming up for the attack. It was bombarded with 21 Medium Regiment. Visibility improved at 1100 hours, Air OP reported seeing 17 tanks{later reported to be considerably more}and numerous enemy dead in Mile Stone-36 and Mile Stone-38 area.”

Brigadier Zafar recalling above event narrates, ”Shoot was carried out for 2 hours and 30 minutes. Own artillery fire was very effective, damaging about 20 enemy vehicles some were carrying the fuel and ammunition, few were seen burning. Three tanks were also disabled. Enemy withdrew towards Valtoha.”

Capture of Lieutenant Colonel Anant Singh

On 12th September 1965 few troops of the Sikh Battalion had successfully infiltrated through our lines and were poised to encircle the 3 Self Propelled {3SP} Artillery Regiment's guns area. As own Air OP was already monitoring the area thus pilots reported about the scattered movement of the enemy, eventually the Sikhs were hauled by the 15 Lancers Squadron, commanded by Major Mokeet and battery of 3 SP. Later own helicopter being flown by Captain Zia along with Lieutenant Colonel Karim as observer were tasked to provide aerial escort. 1st Armoured Division War Diary records; "At 1100 hours Air OP reported battalion attack from the right flank, on guns area of 3 Self Propelled Regiment. The regiment was alerted and the enemy was surrounded and 136 POWs were captured including their Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Anant Singh.

THE SECOND INDIAN WAVE

1st Armoured Division's War Diary further records that epic day, "At 1500 hours, Air OP reported approximately a squadron of tanks and some infantry in Mile Stone -36. General Officer Commanding was informed about this. Target was engaged and dispersed. Intercepted enemy wireless indicates that the H-Hour was disrupted due to Air OP. "At 1700 hours Air OP again pointed out the tank squadron and infantry

advancing towards Mile Stone-27 from Mile Stone-36. Air OP now reports advance of two more squadrons of tanks and some infantry in Mile Stone-36 area. At once guns put down heavy concentration of fire controlled by Air OP, wireless intercept revealed that enemy infantry was unwilling to resume the advance.”

The Indian attack which had fizzled out on 12th September 1965 still carried on till 14th September. On 13th September according to Captain Zafar. “Whole day we carried out battlefield surveillance by then perhaps it was decided to halt the operations in this sector. On 14th morning our original flight of Major Hissam, Captain Nouman, Captain Khalid Kamal and myself, was ordered to move back to Gujranwala and join 2 Army Aviation Squadron. Whereas Lieutenant Colonel M M Karim with 2 Squadron’s Flight consisting of Major Taleh Mian, Captain Ishaq and Captain Ali Jawahar stayed back at Lahore to support 11 Division.

11 Division’s War Diary

11 Division Artillery was coordinating the flying of 2 Army Aviation Squadron their War Diary reveals following tasks given to the pilots;

“On the night of 13/14 September 11 Division Artillery ordered first light Air OP sorties to observe enemy movement around Hussainiwala Head works. “At

1530 hours 11 Division's Operations Room was informed that large forward movement of vehicles was reported from Bhikkiwind – Khem Karan Bridge. Air OP was tasked to carry out surveillance at once of these areas.”

“At 0830 hours on 16th September enemy radar at Ferozepur Landing Ground became active, Air OP was sent and the radar was engaged with 35 Heavy Artillery Regiment.”

“At 1030 hours on 16th September enemy moved his tanks from direction of Gaiwind Jhaman towards BRB, four Sherman tanks got bogged down, Air OP engaged and two tanks were destroyed.”

“At 0730 hours on 17th September Commander Artillery passed following instructions:-

“Enemy is bound to put up a major attack, to deny the engagement of Rohi Nullah Bridge to enemy medium guns Air OP will take on positions becoming active south of Dibbi Pura as a priority one task.”

“At 0830 hours on 18th September - “Air OP engaged concentration of enemy tanks and vehicles on track Ghawind-Jhaman, one tank was seen burning.”

“On 21st September Air OP carried observed shooting of enemy tanks and soft vehicles in area Rajkoo and Wan.”

SIALKOT SECTOR

On the first light of 6th September 1965 Commanding Officer 1 Army Aviation Squadron, who had stayed the night at the Headquarters 7 Division at Chak Pandit where his No. 2 Flight was supporting the 7 Division operations (only flight to operate from held territory), was going to the mess to have his breakfast, when General Officer Commanding 7 Division came rushing out of his caravan. On seeing Lieutenant Colonel Mahmood, General Yahya told that the C-in-C General Musa was on the line a short while ago. He{General Musa} had just told me that the Indians had attacked Pakistan across the International Border. The attack had come at the Jassar Bridge, Burki and Kasur Sector. General Yahya further told that C-in-C had informed him that the enemy had captured Jassar Bridge. Before deciding to rush in some reinforcements or to organize a full-fledged counter attack, a clarification was very much needed.

On the same very day {i.e. 6th September} Major Latif the No. 1 Flight commander of 1 Squadron at Dhamial, was told to proceed to Sialkot. No. 3 Flight of 1 Army Aviation Squadron commanded by Major Hissam was ordered to report to 2 Army Aviation

Squadron at Kharian in lieu of No. 6 Flight which was under command 1 Squadron, they were also told to leave two aircraft (piloted by Captain Anwar and Lieutenant Qasim) at Bhimber in support of No. 4 Sector. No. 6 Flight was initially moved to Gujrat and then to Adamke on Daska-Sambrial Road to support 4 Corps Artillery and 6 Armoured Division. Lieutenant Colonel M M Mahmood flew back to his squadron headquarters at Lakhnwal in helicopter, which was under enemy air attack.

JASSAR BRIDGE

Lieutenant Colonel M M Mahmood along with his second-in-command, Major Nazir and adjutant, Captain Khalid Kamal immediately took off to confirm news about Jassar Bridge. Short of Jassar, adjutant was told to land at Sialkot for latest update from Headquarters 15 Division. Commanding officer and second-in-command flew over the Jassar Bridge, they flew low to clearly see the fighting taking place across the bridge beyond our enclave on the Indian side of the bridge. They flew over the positions of own 115 Brigade. The close aerial view gave a very re-assuring picture. The bridge was intact and in firm control of own brigade. Later this news was conveyed to General

Officer Commanding 15 Division, Brigadier Ismail and Colonel Staff 15 Division, Colonel Mehdi after landing at Sialkot.

At Tactical Headquarters 7 Division at Chak Pandit, Major General Yahya was waiting very anxiously for the news. When informed that his appreciation of own strength at Jassar was correct and that the bridge was intact, he very excitedly exclaimed, “Did not I tell you that?” He further informed that he as General Officer Commanding 15 Division had walked the entire area on foot and conceived and planned the defensive plan of the area to the minutes details. Emphatically he explained that the logical line of the enemy attack would be on Charwa-Chobara- Phillorah - Chawinda Axis.

It was further revealed that on 5th September a Despatch Rider{DR} of the enemy was captured by 15 Division. In the mail being carried by the DR, there were some letters addressed to the Indian 1st Armoured Division. Colonel Staff gave some important letters and documents in support of it to the Commanding Officer of 1 Army Aviation Squadron and asked him to fly those out to General Headquarters. It was done promptly. General Headquarters now had the information on 6th September that Indian 1st Armoured Division was in the area Samba. But there were some apprehensions, lest it was a ploy.

24 Brigade along with 25 Cavalry had been positioned in area Charwa as part of the defensive plan of 15 Division. They were the committed reserves of the division. But because of the conflicting and confusing picture emerging at Jassar, by the evening of 6th September, 24 Brigade minus 3 Frontier Force Regiment{FF} and 25 Cavalry had been ordered to move to the area Jassar for any possible counter attack. The sensitive corridor of Maharajke-Charwa- Chobara had been denuded of troops.

On the night of 6-7 September 1965, enemy moved in this sector, the entire area which was the defensive position of 24 Brigade Group, was held by 3 FF Regiment.1 Army Aviation Squadron's War Diary records, “ 7 September 1965.No. 2 Flight was reporting increasing enemy activity in area Charwa-Chaubara. Indians having captured a firm base in area Charwa, had now broken through,with armoured formations.” “24 Brigade Group had been moved towards Jassar the previous evening. The whole sector right from Phillaura-Chawinda-Pasrur had practically no troops, situation most confusing, enemy out of reach of our guns.”

There was not much activity in the way of adjustment of artillery fire. This was essentially so because the units of 4 Corps Artillery kept shuttling between Pasrur and Narowal in response to the confusing picture at Jassar.

Maharajke-Sialkot Axis

In the evening of **7th September** 15 Division asked for a sortie of the L-19 aircraft along the International Border. Orders were given that without crossing the boundary the area across the Indian side should be observed. The Army Aviator was to specifically look for any major concentrations and movements of the enemy in the area. Captain Niazi was detailed on this mission. He flew all along the boundary from Sialkot all the way to River Chenab. He noticed no movement or concentration of the enemy. He went to Headquarters 15 Division and briefed Colonel Staff, Colonel Mehdi. At mid night **7th September** a call came from Headquarters 15 Division, Colonel Mehdi told commanding officer 1 Army Aviation Squadron that enemy had launched its attack. The main axis was Gadgor-Charwa-Chobara-Phillarauh.

Commanding Officer detailed Captain Niazi to fly on first light **8th September** to confirm these news. He was also told to observe the strength and the direction of the enemy attack. Captain Niazi again flew along the boundary from Sialkot all the way to River Chenab. He noticed no movement or concentration of the enemy. Pilot recalls “I crossed the border about 10 miles deep into the Indian territory but still could not locate any enemy armour. Must say they were well

camouflaged.” On his way back, ground controller warned him that Indian fighter aircraft were crossing back into India from the same direction. He was flying at 100 feet Above ground level. Pilot narrates “The next moment these were over me. To escape, I pushed my aircraft towards the ground. As I had gone into nose dive my controls became ineffective. The earth was fast coming towards me and I prayed, “Oh God! Don’t let me die a useless death, I have yet not seen any action?” Sure! Allah heard it and responded; the nose of the aircraft picked up a little and he made a smooth half loop at tree top level. That was his first brush with death and both made friends. Captain Niazi did not abandon the task given to him. He again flew to area Maharajke where he noticed an enemy column of tanks moving towards Sialkot, on the track Maharajke - Sialkot. He saw the leading tank reach the vicinity of Aik Nadi near Faizabad. Major General {retired} Niazi writes; “I was on the reconnaissance mission and I saw 15-16 tanks moving from Charwa towards Sialkot. For positive identification I flew low over these tanks. These tanks opened up with their 50 mm machine guns. I could feel that bullets were hitting the aircraft around the wings and fuselage and the fuel also started to leak. I continued to fly and communicated enemy location to the base. I landed back. The aircraft had received 32 bullets, how did these missed me is again a miracle?”. Captain Niazi returned to Sialkot Strip and gave the news to Colonel

Staff 15 Division personally. 15 Division immediately sent some anti tank weapons to Aik Nadi. As the enemy tanks arrived near Aik Nadi, these weapons{RR} fired upon them. Under the fire they returned. Bullet ridden aircraft was later flown by Major Burki for repairs at Dhamial.

Chawinda- Phillaurah Axis

Indian move on Maharajke-Sialkot axis turned out to be a diversionary move. But where was the main attack coming from?.On 8th September 1965, commanding officer and second-in-command of 1 Army Aviation Squadron flew out in a L-19. They first reached Chawinda and then started flying towards Phillaurah. There were no signs of any of our troops on the ground,. It was clear that 24 Brigade Group had not yet arrived back in that area. At a distance they saw a cloud of dust on the track Charwa-Chobara-Phillaurah. charging along that track towards Phillaurah at a high speed. Suddenly the second-in- command gave a shout of bandits to the commanding officer on the wireless. The L-19 was already flying low and the pilot braced himself for any evasive action that might be required. Suddenly he saw those aircraft diving towards the enemy column. The rockets fired were very accurate and a number of enemy vehicles were seen on fire. There were puffs of fire and smoke coming out every time these aircraft were diving

in their attack runs and firing their rockets. There was a great excitement and the sight was very re-assuring. The pounding of our Air Force on the attacking columns of enemy armour had its telling effect. Between 10-15 of the enemy armoured vehicles were on fire. The attack had halted and the enemy tanks and other vehicles were hurriedly dispersing. Enemy again started its dash soon after the air attack was over. About twenty AMX tanks in line astern were charging towards the Phillaura, they by passed it and headed for Chawinda. The L-19 kept flying alongside the Indian advancing armoured vehicles and tanks. The need for integral fire support capability with the Army Aviation was never so acutely felt before. So far there was no resistance or opposition to the Indian advance on the ground. Suddenly from the direction of Chawinda signs of movement on the ground appeared, they were our own Patton tanks of 25 Cavalry. It was reminiscences of charge of Light Brigade at Balaclava. After a short but fierce fight the advancing Indian columns turned around on the same track that they came on.

Lieutenant Colonel Mahmood flew back to Sialkot and went straight to Headquarters 15 Division. His arrival was most anxiously awaited. The first accurate news and account of the arrival of 24 Brigade Group in the area of Chawinda, brought a sign of relief. The account of rapid thrust of the Indian columns, the action of own Air Force, the enemy re-grouping and

resumption of advance to Chawinda and the climax of sudden appearance of own Patton tanks, was both chilling and exhilarating. Later captured Operational Orders of Indian 17 Cavalry revealed that 17 and 16 Cavalry were part of Indian Armoured Division. Whole operation had been stalled within 3-4 miles of launching by 24 Infantry Brigade and notably by 25 Cavalry Regiment. Commanding Officer 25 Cavalry, Lieutenant Colonel Nisar was later awarded Sitara-e-Jurrat. Later these papers were handed over to Captain Askree for onward deliverance to General Headquarters. Command of 15 Division was also handed over to Major General Tikka. For the second time in two days, the accurate and authentic information provided by Army Aviation proved salutary. The first regarding Jassar Bridge the second one about 24 Brigade

9th September was relatively quiet. The enemy was licking his wounds inflicted by PAF and 25 Cavalry. The 4 Corps Artillery covered the entire front, stretching from Badiana to Deg Nadi (Zafarwal) and beyond. Any enemy attack or manoeuvre would immediately attract the fire of nearly ninety guns, field, medium and heavy calibre. 2 Army Aviation Squadron's War Diary records: "Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Khan took off at 0500 hours with Captain Muazzam to cooperate with Headquarters 15 Division for Artillery shoots. Enemy air force was active against them and they were also fired upon by the ground enemy guns. "On the evening of 9th

September, 24 Brigade Group positions were attacked by the enemy tanks and infantry, it was repulsed by the 25 Cavalry supported by Artillery, Air OP also conducted shoots during its defensive action.

Air Control Team (ACT) Radio Sets in L-19

Army Aircraft did not have the requisite radio sets to communicate with the PAF jets at the start of war. It was Colonel Muhammad Khan's brain child to use the army aircraft fitted with ACT sets. 6 Armoured Division had only six sets out of which, two were out of action from the start, two were with Army Aviation, one was unserviceable and one was with the Divisional Headquarters. On 8th September Division Headquarters handed over two VRC-24 radio sets to 2 Army Aviation Squadron. Captain Jamil and Major Akhtar flew from Gujranwala and brought them back. They were fitted in aircraft and later one was handed over to No. 6 Flight at Sialkot.

The sets did not respond as desired, therefore on 9th September Captain Muazzam flew with a signal technician from Gujranwala to Sialkot and landed back at 0100 hours with news of good communication established. Next day at 0445 hours Captain Jamil and Captain Sajjad took off for Sialkot from Gujranwala to hand over the sets fitted in L-19 to the flight. It was still dark at the strip, when pilots came for landing they hit

the embankment and crashed. Set VRC 24 was brought back to Gujranwala and fitted in other aircraft and flown back to Sialkot at 1000 hours same day another aircraft stalled and crashed at Adamke Strip with Major Rabbani and Captain Nagy on board.

11th September 1965-Gadogar

By first light 11th September 1965 the full weight of the Indian Armoured Division's attack came at Gadgor. The Gadgor and Phillaurah positions were overrun by the advancing enemy armour. To stem the enemy advance, Guides Cavalry counter attacked and relieved pressure on 11 Cavalry. With the counter attack of Guides Cavalry from the location at Rakh Baba Bhure Shah towards Bhagowal and Phillaurah, an intense tank battle ensued. The Army Aviators were operating on the wireless nets of the artillery formations. This was only useful for quick adjustment of artillery fire. There was no direct contact with own armour and infantry units. The information to our field units had to be relayed through the artillery nets. Sometimes it caused delays and on occasions confusion. There were queries and counter queries, to clear the conflicting interpretations and descriptions. War Diary of 2 Squadron records: "They {pilots} returned in the evening bringing back the news of heavy fighting in Sialkot Sector. Many enemy tanks were damaged and other military equipment and vehicles

destroyed. Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Khan with artillery fire blew two enemy tanks up, Major Akhtar and Captain Muazzam claimed another one. Good job done by our bold pilots.”

12th September 1965-OH-13 Shot Down-

Soon after sunrise, Captain Bajwa of 3 Squadron attached with 2 Squadron, landed at the Headquarters 6 Armoured Division in Sialkot Sector. The pilot waited for the early morning briefing / conference to end. At about 0730 hours the conference ended and the G-1 Operations Lieutenant Colonel Nazir Ahmed came to the chopper and told the pilot to start up. The pilot paused and requested for some briefing regarding the mission. Overwhelmed with some urgency he said that he would guide the pilot and that he should first land at Chawinda, where he shall be briefed before proceeding to the tank regiment at Phillora. The pilot inquired if the regiment had been informed about their arrival. The G-1 briefed an officer to pass the message on the wireless and advise them to wave a white hankie. He was carrying a fairly large size mounted map marked with the battle locations and asked if it would fit inside. He kept the map in his lap.

After take off the pilot kept the G-1 well oriented with the terrain by pointing out salient features en route. The

pilot was directed to land on the outskirts of Chawinda and keep the helicopter engine running. The Colonel summoned an officer nearby and asked for directions. We flew around outskirts of Chawinda town, where the new trenches were being dug. During the pilots briefing last night at the squadron, our FDL's were at Phillora the previous evening.

By now the passenger had informed the pilot that he was proceeding to personally contact elements of a tank regiment, which was in contact with the enemy. The colonel was to pass some vital information / briefing personally as the same could not be risked on the wireless.

When the pilot was directed to follow the road to Phillora, he did not hesitate. The pilot had been assigned on two missions inside enemy territory during Rann Kutch battle, last April. The pilot took necessary precautions when directed to proceed to Phillora. The pilot narrates.

"Realising that we were going into no mans land, we headed towards Phillora, keeping to the west of the

road, flying at below the tree top level, to avoid detection from the ground as well as aerial interception. I had to keep a good lookout for our survival. Beyond Chawinda there were no signs of life or any movement as far as one could see, in about 5 miles visibility. There were occasional scanty crops along the way up to village Kallewali, which was totally deserted. Not even a stray dog was to be seen. I identified the village to the colonel while passing by.

The Colonel urged the pilot to proceed ahead towards Phillora. Between Kallewali and Phillora there were no crops. The flat ploughed fields for the next 1000 yards had turned into fine powdery dust. At Phillora a knoll about 30 ft high indicated tell tale signs of an OP position.

In the meanwhile the Indians had earlier intercepted our wireless message. Realising that a chopper is likely to fly close to their position to proceed to a cavalry squadron that had encircled and cut them out from the north. Ostensibly the Indians ordered their tanks at Phillora to shut down turrets and point the guns backwards.

I spotted one tank camouflaged in the scanty sugar cane field barely 100 yards west of the high ground and

pointed it to the colonel. Immediately three more tanks were spotted by me and indicated to the passenger. All the tanks were littered with dust with their guns pointing towards India and camouflaged at the edge of the sugar cane fields. No soldiers were visible anywhere. The colonel directed me to land close to the nearest tank. I declined to land and kick up a whirlwind of dust, that would have given out our position. Instead I reduced speed and proceeded to land about 200 yards beyond the nearest tank. This dust free spot with scanty cotton field beyond the tank provided good cover from ground and air. The far sides of the cotton field had about 10 feet tall “Jantar” hedge that would provide cover on the ground

As the chopper passed a beam the nearest tank the pilot heard a burst of machine gun fire. Barely at 10 feet above the ground and drifting at a low speed, the helicopter suddenly started yawing to the left. Increasing engine power would worsen the torque. Countering the torque with cyclic control provided some momentum. Gaining sufficient speed was not possible.

On hearing the fire the colonel started cursing the ground troops and was anxiously waiting to step out, for which he had opened the side door slightly, while the chopper was still on the move. I was struck with disbelief and decided on SOS measures. The pilot gradually tried

to abort landing as the chopper was yawing to the left despite excessive cyclic tilt to the opposite side. In 3 large oval turns the pilot managed to drag the chopper about 250 yards towards our side of the nearest tank. After the 3rd dragging turn to offset the apparent loss of torque I put the chopper down facing the tank. It was not possible to drag it any further. The colonel by now had realised that we had been hit. He was convinced that we were being engaged by own troops by mistake. On touchdown he immediately got out and ran towards the tank cursing them loudly.

I had no faith left in his judgement. After a quick shutdown procedure I bolted for the cover beyond the raised surface of the un metalled road, at a distance of about 60 yards to the right. As I dashed across the road and ducked behind the cover of the raised road, I heard the nearest tank fire with its main gun. A quick peep at the helicopter indicated it was a miss. The second round was obviously a hit. All the other 3 tanks fired one shot each in turn. I felt sad to see the brand new helicopter which had barely logged 100 hrs, burn to ashes. The Colonel had left the marked map inside which burned along with the helicopter.

I realised our lives were in grave danger with little chance of survival. The tanks were only 250-500 yards away and we were pinned down over 4 miles ahead of our new front line. It seemed absolutely hopeless. Within minutes we heard a battery of field guns fire a salvo. The number of bangs confirmed it was Indian. Thank God the battery fired a few salvos in concentration at at the helicopter only. The time at this point was 0830 hrs on my watch.

In the meanwhile our forces intercepted an Indian wireless message from Phillora “ We have shot down a commando helicopter and two commandos have taken cover with a machine gun and a sten gun and we have pinned them down. We have requested for artillery fire and air support.” With this message every one had lost hope of our survival. Both of us had only a pistol each.

At the loss of all the hope for survival in the lap of the enemy, I momentarily went into a trance. In a split second, images of all the dear relations, family and friends flashed through the mind at a fast speed. At the end I felt sorry to realise that they will all be hurt on hearing the news.

Gradually I gathered strength and started imagining there might be hope for survival. I was hoping our jets might launch a strike, for a chopper to rescue us under the air cover. In a few minutes I could hear the jets. These jets were coming from the Indian side. I tucked myself into a pit besides the road. Four jets made two passes each rocketing, the burning helicopter. Later the leader of this formation got a gallantry award for shooting us down.

Fortunately the artillery had fired in concentration at the chopper and none of the shells fell on the road or on our side. In the meanwhile the colonel who had taken cover at least 50 yards closer to the tanks, had by now crawled close to me and urged me to keep moving. I convinced him that he should now follow my advice being a gunner.

In the meanwhile enough dust and smoke provided us cover and we managed to crawl homewards, by about 100 yards. As the dust settled the tanks must have spotted our dusty crawl across the road and showered a few bursts of machine gun fire, which passed over our heads. The slightly raised road provided us adequate protection while flushed with the ground. We stopped crawling and froze at the same spot for a while, keeping our ears wide open.

In a few minutes the artillery fire was resumed. Now the target seemed to be the road. A concentrated salvo fell barely 50 yards ahead of us. We thanked god for the pause. The colonel urged me to continue crawling but I did not let him move till the next salvo landed another 50 yards ahead. It was apparent that the artillery observer wanted to comb the road up to Kallewali village. We started crawling desperately behind the moving artillery fire. The fire moved faster than we could crawl. After several minutes the fire lifted. We crawled all the way up to 100 yards short of the village.

Surprisingly none of the tanks made an attempt to leave their positions in order to capture us. With passage of time our hopes gained strength. We paused 100 yards short of the village in order to assess the situation and to have a breather.

The village was on raised ground and the last 100 yards of road was devoid of any trees or cover from observation. We were certain that the tanks barely 1000 yards away, would engage us over this patch. We therefore had to run for life over this stretch, which required all the strength. The colonel was no longer in a

state to continue crawling. He urged me to carry on without him while I did not wish to leave him alone. Finally when he explained that he could not proceed any further, due to exhaustion and that I should get along and send help. It seemed to make sense now.

I expected the road passing through the village to be mined and decided to run for the nearest four feet high boundary wall of a house and jump across. I therefore gathered all my strength and bolted over the exposed stretch and somersaulted over the boundary wall, into the nearest house drawing fire from the tanks. I followed the fresh tank tracks to the middle of the village. Before leaving the village, I popped up to peer over the wall to scan the entire area to the east of the road.

I noticed a jeep trudging along cross country, from the west. The jeep mounted with a weapon was heading towards the village, at about one mile distance. Cautioning the colonel without response I got on to the road and ran along the fresh tank or vehicle tracks leading out of the village.

Beyond the village I decided to deflect about 30 degrees to the right to proceed under cover of the crops and along a depression in the ground. Once at a reasonable safe distance in the middle of the scanty corn crop I managed to have a look at the village. The jeep was now at the forward edge of the village on the raised road, apparently assessing the situation. I ran along momentarily kicking the dusty ground along the bank of the small nullah before getting low and out of sight. I am not certain if that drew enemy attention but the jeep soon after sprayed bullets wildly, in the general direction.

I proceeded along safely but an angle to my desired direction to Chawinda. After going for 1.5 mile I diverted towards the road and then walked leisurely when Chawinda was in sight. On a hot and humid day, by now I was exhausted and fairly bruised on elbows and knees. The flying suit was muddy with sweat and dust and torn at the elbows and knees. I was rather dehydrated with terribly dry lips and throat. It was almost mid day by now.

As Chawinda drew closer, a sudden fear started haunting and depressing me. Would the soldiers on the frontline care to identify me before opening fire at someone looking as strange as me in my unfamiliar

attire? The thought of being killed at the hands of our own troops, after having escaped an unbelievable ordeal, was too depressing and pitiable.

From about 1000 yards I tried to walk with the hands over my head, not easily possible in my present state. Nevertheless I put in all efforts to look as harmless as a dove. As I came closer, I noticed troops emerging out of the crops and descending into the trenches and pointing their weapons at the stranger. I felt like a convict facing a firing squad. I proceeded slowly and cautiously.

At about 200 yards I was challenged and asked to come closer. At about 50 yards I tried to identify myself to their amusement. Soon an officer emerged on the scene and took over. As soon as I was recognised I desperately asked for the water. The company commander also appeared on the scene. He sympathised and remarked, "Bajwa when I heard the news, I hoped it was not you. Little did I know." He confided that I was the only one aviator that he knew, from the infantry school course during 1963. At the battalion HQ I narrated the episode to Lt.Col. Shinwari, the CO 22 Baluch.

While the doctor put me on the stretcher for the first aid, I started narrating the details to the CO. The colonel ordered his jeep to be mounted with a machine gun and a section of selected soldiers to prepare to accompany him for recovering Lt. Col Nazir. He refused to take me along due to my physical condition. Within half an hour the party departed along the road towards Phillora.

Within half an hour we heard the exchange of small arms fire for several minutes. After about two hours the party returned. From a distance we concluded the news was not good. On return Colonel Shinwari seemed depressed. He confirmed that they had searched up to the forward edge of the village and beyond and drew enemy fire. There was no sign of Colonel Nazir, as he had not responded to their shouting for him even by name.

I mentioned to the Colonel that having gone through what we had , one would not trust any one and I was confident that he would show up during the night . The front line troops were

conveyed to be cautious and hold fire at night as the Colonel was expected to cross the FDL's during the night. At 1500 hours I departed by road, to join the number 2 composite squadron at Gujranwala.

The following morning I heard the good news that the colonel had crossed over at night and was admitted in the hospital, suffering from shell shock and exhaustion. I was allowed to meet him only on the third day. When we were face to face, I had to introduce myself, as he failed to recognise me, although I was in a similar flying suit. On recognition he embraced me passionately. With tears in his eyes, he remarked, “ No one shall ever believe what we have gone through and are still alive.”

The colonel then narrated that after our separation he discovered the presence of a graveyard in the vicinity of the village. He crawled and rolled over, into a sunken grave and soon passed out. He vaguely recalled having heard small arms fire on two occasions. He had no idea about the recovery attempt for his rescue. He finally woke up when it was dark and made his way to the FDL's at around midnight.

The same evening Lt. Col. Mohd Khan CO of the squadron conveyed me a message that the Corps Commander Lt. Gen. Rana has directed to recommend the pilot for an immediate award of an SJ and has asked for the written citation from the squadron. The CO in

turn asked me to write my citation. It did not appear dignified for me to write my own citation, particularly when the commanders at all levels were by now in complete picture of the entire episode.

When hostilities ended and the forces were withdrawn, Major Bajwa and Col Nazir, revisited the crash site on 7.5.66. The same flight of 12.9.65 was simulated. The H-13 helicopter followed the same height speed and the flight path till touch down. The distances were paced and the entire episode recalled and the Almighty thanked once again, for giving us another life.

Some useful lessons are to be learnt from this episode. The pilot should make his own judgement and be cautious about getting influenced by the passenger, no matter how professional or closely related to the objective. Once in the air, the observation of the passenger / guide may not be as keen or precise as the pilot, who is used to the air. Pilots are advised to have a substantial breakfast and adequate intake of liquids before embarking on risky missions during the war. In this case the pilot recalled having light breakfast and only one cup of tea since 2100 hours the previous evening.

1 Army Aviation Squadron had to change it's location as strip was becoming nuisance. It was hemmed in by a Medium Regiment on one side and a Heavy Battery on the other. Enemy air and counter bombardment was equally shared by all three. Only once did a L-19 got the splinters. After the intense fire of 10/11 September squadron reshuffled it's deployment at the landing ground. Pasrur Airfield was also scene of intense aerial and ground activities. Own 1st Armoured Division also joined there. A good number of Army aircraft operated around and an Officer's Mess was established in the vicinity of the World War- II vintage airfield at Pasrur. Although strip was established on 16th September but airfield was under use from the beginning. On 12th September at 0630 hours when pilots after landing were in the process of covering their aircraft they were attacked by the IAF, heavy bombs were dropped apart from strafing.

13th September 1965 -Zafarwal

On 12th September 1965 Army Aviators noticed enemy movement towards Zafarwal and the information was passed to 6 Armoured Division. They reacted and Zafarwal was occupied on the night 12th /13th September 1965. On the morning of 13th September 1965 the enemy main attack came at Zafarwal. The biggest tank battle

since WW-2 was unfolding. In the face of the enemy attack, own infantry positions were holding ground. Situation was turning favourably however a squadron of 32 Tank Delivery Unit (Sherman Tanks) under fog of war withdrew from its position. The pilot of L-19 operating in the area, Captain Niazi, was told on the wireless net to give the message to the squadron to immediately return to Zafarwal. The pilot flew over the tanks moving towards Dhamtal. He gestured and kept indicating to them to return to Zafarwal. There was no response. He wrote a message and dropped it but to no avail. Sensing that all efforts had failed, the pilot landed the L-19 on the road in front of the tanks. The squadron at that time was commanded by a Risaldar. Captain Niazi personally explained the position to him and ordered to return back to Zafarwal. The tanks were thus successfully sent back. They later effectively participated against the enemy at Zafarwal Sector.

Captain Zafar was carrying out the reconnaissance mission in Pasrur area when his L-19 was hit by the ground fire, he never knew about that and it was only after landing that he was shown the holes. Intensive flying was kept up despite the activities of IAF. Increasing demands of artillery shoots were met by pooling all resources of pilots and aircraft

First Air Support Request through L-19

On 13th September 1965 for the first time Army Aviation called upon air support successfully through ACT fitted in L-19, piloted by Captain Jamil. Through air action five enemy tanks were burnt. Under the intense fire of own guns, the enemy tanks would disperse and bury themselves in the mud houses for their camouflage. The same practice they would follow, whenever our Air Force pounded them. Own Air Force was doing sorties very regularly and effectively. The ACT set carried in the L-19, was proving to be very helpful. The aerial observers were most efficiently directing our aircraft on to the enemy tanks. "Five enemy tanks were destroyed and later another three were seen burning due to air force attacks conducted by airborne control team." {War Diary 2 Army Aviation Squadron}.

On 14th September one Ultra High Frequency {UHF} radio set was provided by 1 Corps Headquarters to 1 Army Aviation Squadron and on the same very day at 0700 hours Major Rabbani along with Captain Jamil directed own aircraft towards enemy tanks with remarkable success. At 1330 hours Captain Muazzam and Captain Jamil again undertook this mission. They stayed for over four hours and twice directed own aircraft onto the enemy. Despite all the confusion of the intense battle on the ground, the close range engagements of our tanks, there was not a single case

where own aircraft attacked any of our own tanks as of mistaken identity. This does reflect the professionalism of our Air Force pilots but also the fact that Army Aviators were very useful in guiding our own pilots. The knowledge of the ground, the exact location of the enemy armour and the full familiarity of own positions greatly helped them in meeting that role. Lieutenant Colonel Saleem Ullah later rang Colonel Mohammad Khan and conveyed PAF's appreciation.

14th September,

Captain Niazi and ``The Destruction of Indian 14 Mountain Division``

On 14th September 1965 Captain HUK Niazi was sent for a surveillance mission around Zafarwal. He did not return for another four hours which was causing commotion at Adamke Strip. As soon as Captain Niazi landed. He explained his prolonged absence. *“After take off I gained height and started flying towards Zafarwal, I saw no enemy activity in the area so I decided to fly North of our positions at Deg Nadi. It was 0815 hours, the sun was in the East. Looking at some distance, I noticed very flashy reflections of the rays of the sun. This was over a fairly large area. This greatly intrigued me and I kept flying in that direction. I crossed the International Boundary, West of Deg Nadi. Getting nearer to these reflections, I saw a huge concentration of enemy vehicles some 4 miles West of Samba. I had a very*

careful look, that was why I took so long in coming back, my estimates are 2000-3000 vehicles." He further informed his Commanding Officer that he had passed that information to divisional headquarters on the artillery net, requesting for Air Force strike.

Lieutenant Colonel Mahmood immediately flew to Headquarters 1 Corps. He conveyed the information personally to Lieutenant General Rana, the Corps Commander. Lieutenant Colonel Mahmood} further very strongly suggested to him that he should himself request the Air Headquarters for an air strike. He did that very promptly. The Air Headquarters was very reluctant to accept the authenticity of the news. Under insistence from the Corps Commander initially only two fighter reconnaissance aircraft were sent. Arriving overhead, they confirmed that news. On the air they requested for all available aircraft to be sent for strike in that area. Soon four F-86 of 18 Squadron, led by Squadron Leader Alau Din 'Butch' arrived. They kept pounding them with all the weapons available, including the napalm bombs, used for the first time in war. Squadron Leader 'Butch' on the same noon, destroyed ammunition train at Gurdaspur. Lion hearted 'Butch' never returned from that sortie.

The prisoners belonging to this formation captured later disclosed that Indian reinforcement {14 Infantry Division} had arrived in Samba area on 14th

September. While still in their concentration area, they were spotted and very badly mauled by Pakistan Air Force. They ceased to exist as a proper fighting formation after that. From the captured enemy 1 Armoured Brigade "OO No. 3", which was signed on 13th September at 1315 hours, it was clear that the main Indian Armoured Division's attack was planned to be launched sometimes on or after 14th September 1965

16th September -Climax

Indian attack did not proceed as planned. The fierce tank battle which started on 13th September reached its climax on 16th September. From the early morning of 16th September, the L-19 aircraft were observing clearly the three main enemy columns of attack. One column was directed towards Chawinda, the centre column was making its thrust between Chawinda and Rakh Baba Bhuhre Shah and the third enemy column was directing its attack west of the Rakh towards Badiana. The Army Aviators kept informing the details of this operation to the relevant formations. The heroic and bold fight of our tank crews blunted a very determined attack of the enemy.

Army Aviators were assisting own troops by reporting enemy movements, directions of attack, reinforcements, losses and also directing own artillery fire on enemy troops, concentration areas and rear areas.

For pilots it was a unique experience to watch exchange of flying shells and missiles, tanks on fire and bursting into pieces, men dying in agony and pain. The battlefield littered with twisted steel, fire, smoke and stench of burnt human flesh also reflected the grit and determination of those who would not give-up even an inch of Pakistani land and the stubbornness of attackers who wanted to achieve a break-through to the Grand Trunk Road. The effective concentration of all available guns, on the attacking enemy armour columns coupled with the accurate and effective direction of our air force, through the ACT sets fitted in the aircraft, did highlight the humble contribution that the un-armed L-19 aircraft were making.

Captain Akhtar {Lieutenant Colonel retired} has profound memories of one such sortie. “We were flying over Chawinda and directing the fire of own artillery guns as Air OP. On the front seat was Captain Niazi, I was in the rear. We looked around and saw two Indian Mystere aircraft overhead. Indian aircraft took a turn and aligned their machines to attack our unarmed, slow moving L-19. Niazi once again put the nose down but could not escape fast enough; the bullets started to go through the aircraft. The enemy fire failed to kill us but crippled the aircraft. With controls damaged, we could not fly straight, one wing of the aircraft was down so we could only go round and round in circles. We managed to reach Sialkot Strip and tried to put the aircraft down.

It was one wing landing. The wing first touched the ground and the aircraft started to somersault. The aircraft broke into pieces and we came out of the cockpit without a scratch. The aircraft was littered with bullet holes. Surely, one would only die when destined by Allah.”

18th September -

On 18th September 1965 the battle of Chawinda was in the final phase with enemy craving for a break through but own troops determined not to give an inch of the motherland. Captain Moazzam took off at 0630 hours with Captain Jamil as co-pilot to act as Forward Airborne Air Controller, target was enemy heavy guns, 6 miles inside enemy territory close to Nawan Shehr. Time over target for own fighters was 0700 hours. Visibility was poor and observation difficult. As they flew forward for better observation they came under enemy anti aircraft fire but Captain Moazzam boldly and skilfully directed own fighters amidst this panoramic fire. He flew up till 500 yards of enemy guns, 3 out of 6 were destroyed.

First Operational Night mission -Night Flight To Sargodha

Brigadier retired Hamid Chaudhry writes, “In 1965 when war broke out, I was in Army Aviation

School as a Qualified Flying Instructor. On 7th September night flying was scheduled for P-7 Course. When I reached the school at night commandant Lieutenant Colonel M M Karim called me and Captain Rasheed Beg (Qualified Flying Instructor) in his office. He briefed us regarding a night mission to Sargodha and back. PAF on the instructions from General Headquarters had flown a photo reconnaissance mission over Jammu area and the photographs were to be picked up from operations room at PAF Base Sargodha and flown to General Headquarters for operational planning. The photographs were to be brought as soon as possible, therefore we were ordered to take off immediately. I filed a flight plan with the tower, the only briefing I got from Air Traffic Controller consisted of the following three sentences:-

“Sargodha Base has been informed of your mission. Sargodha Base is likely to be attacked by Indian Air Force tonight therefore keep your navigation lights off and keep radio communication to bare minimum. On arrival at Sargodha you might not get the runway lights for landing therefore land in total darkness.”

“We took off at around 2030 hours on the 7th September 1965 in L-19 No. 013 for Sargodha Base. We had just crossed Salt Range and started descending when we got a short call from Sargodha. “L-19 approaching Sargodha stay to the North, Sargodha

under air raid." The next thing we saw was an umbrella barrage being fired by own Anti Aircraft Regiments. I myself is an Anti Aircraft Gunner and had read about "Umbrella Barrage" but seeing one was really believing it. We started circling over Jhelum River and after ten minutes were cleared to approach Sargodha Airfield for landing. We headed towards the airfield and according to time flown should have been overhead the field but not a single thing was visible on ground due to complete black out. Sargodha runway had a black surface, which added to our difficulty of recognition. Sargodha controller was hesitant to talk to us and not prepared to give us runway lights for landing. In the meantime to our good luck we saw two jets taking off from the runway. We were at such a position that we could see the flares coming out of their tail pipes. We immediately headed for the runway, informed the ATC and made a safe landing.

We were still rolling on the runway and happily discussing our safe landing that we got another short call from the air traffic controller "L-19 get off the runway, switch off and take cover." We immediately pulled off towards the fair weather strip and went close to the tree line. Within seconds we saw the Anti Aircraft Regiment firing another Umbrella Barrage. At the same time we heard a formation of Indian Jets drop two heavy bombs at the airfield at low level. The only damage

caused was to a taxi track and luckily there was no loss of life or aircraft. Witnessing an umbrella barrage is one thing but penetrating it requires a lion's heart, the devil must be given his due, they were brave pilots. Later we learnt that they were four aircraft and one was hit."

Once that raid was over, we started the aircraft and taxied to the parking area. We called for the required documents from PAF Operations Room and headed back for Dhamial. We reached Dhamial past the mid night where representatives from General Headquarters were eagerly waiting. That was the first operational night mission of 1965 war by an Air OP.

Turning into a Bomber Base

On some nights, Dhamial Base was utilized by the PAF to launch couple of their improvised strategic bombers to take care of the suspected enemy concentrations behind the front-lines. Of course, for the purpose, the fleet of lumbering C-130 was utilized with ingenuity and imagination. Such actions always created some excitement at the base. Lieutenant Colonel Naseer Ullah Babar was the Duty Officer at the base when the sortie of C-130 was conducted. He recalls: "It was the policy of PAF to disperse their aircraft in anticipation of Indian air attacks. My office was at the present day tea bar. At night I received a call from a Grade-1 staff

officer at Lahore in which he mentioned about the reports of Indian concentration close to BRB Canal. Wing Commander Eric of PAF was also listening and he inquired about the situation on which I mentioned the conversation. The original task of C-130 was somewhere but Wing Commander Eric insisted on taking up that task in addition to the already designated targets and after lot of coordination the mission was finally approved. The bombing was accurate and deadly and later Wing Commander Eric was awarded with Sitara-I-Jurat.

L-23 Missions

During the daylight hours, some missions were undertaken by the solitary L-23, piloted by Major Shams Kureishy and Major Mushtaq Madni, to take General Musa to Lahore, Hafizabad and Pasrur during the war.

Beavers arrived at Dhamial Base

Four Beaver{L-20} aircraft were requisitioned from Plant Protection Department. These six-seater, single-engine aircraft arrived at Dhamial Base on 27th July 1965. On 6th September evening there were two of these aircraft at the Base. On 8th another Beaver was flown in by Mr. Zaka Ullah Khan and remained so till 24th March 1966. Selected officers, including Majors

Ayub, Fazal ur Rehman, Mansoor Sial, Aftab, Masoom, Saqlain and Captain Abdul Rasheed Baig underwent conversion from 14th June-26th June and from 2nd July to 17th July 1965. These officers had been familiar with the Beaver aircraft by virtue of undergoing instrument flying on it either at Stuttgart {Germany} or at Fort Rucker {America}. Instructor was Mr. Zaka Ullah Khan, the Chief pilot of Plant Protection at Karachi ; all Beavers were in Yellow Colour.

The first operational sortie was under taken By Major Ayub and Major Fazal ur Rehman on 7th September 1965. It flew to Quetta and brought Major General Shahibzada Yaqub Ali Khan and Colonel Sawar Khan{later Vice Chief of Army Staff}. Both the officers were urgently required at General Headquarters; as Command and Staff College had been closed. On 20th September 1965,two Indian pilots {POWs}were flown from Rahwali to Rawalpindi. Mr. Zakaullah Khan also flew operational sorties. He writes: "For days I would fly from Dhamial to Karachi/Hyderabad, landing down on the way at various places{HQs},delivering critical ammunition, medicines, mail and surveillance. I flew first Indian POW from Chhor to Rawalpindi, he was Colonel K.K.V. Nimba. Army Commander, General Musa was also flown by me on 18th September 1965 from Rawalpindi to Suleimanke." Colonel Awan, Lieutenant Colonel Zafar Khan the base second-in-command along with Lieutenant Colonels Mahmood and

Saeed Qadir, planned to turn Beaver into a light bomber aircraft. Trials were conducted at Bara Khau at the end of war. That was to be done by a little modification, installing a commode like structure with an aperture for dropping an appropriate size bomb manually on selected target. Beavers flew 377 operational hours.

Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Khan, after consultation with the technical staff, improvised a pod for mounting an Medium Machine Gun{MMG} on the OH-13 helicopter skids but was bit too late as the war was about to terminate.

Enemy Para troopers

On 7th September Lieutenant Colonel Saleem Ullah was in the General Headquarters to attend the daily briefing. Army Chief General Musa was also present. Colonel Saleem narrates: “I was standing in one corner when telephone rang, since General Musa was close by he picked up the telephone and talked. Later he told us that Indian paratroopers had landed in Sargodha area and inquired about own troops in the vicinity, there were none, so he ordered the Station Commander Jhelum to stand on the road and divert Commando Company who were to pass through and then he looked at me and ordered to have aircraft sweep the area.” The base was put on red alert that night, to search the area around the

airfield especially the likely places considered as the suitable sites for rallying of enemy's para-troopers.

A fighting patrol was pushed out under the command of Captain Irshad Gul { brigadier retired}. He combed the suspected corners successfully but on return the patrol was fired upon by a jittery defender who had not become really proficient in the art of challenging and differentiation between friend and foe. Luckily the trigger-happy soldier was not a marksman and no one was hurt.

Subsequently Captain Shaffat and Captain Sheraz went in the L-19 to Chiniot area for the search of enemy paratroopers; they did not find any thing. Again on 9th September Major Sultan and Captain Sagheer flew in OH-13(S) No. 143 and 139 to search enemy paratroopers but returned without vain.

2 Army Aviation Squadron's War Diary also records that "At 2230 hours on 8th September, an alarm was raised in the camp that some enemy paratroopers had been dropped near by. Captain Jamil, Muazam and Salim took few soldiers to find them out. The search was of no avail."

At Sialkot 1 Army Aviation Squadron was also not immune from rumours, on the evening of 10th September, few civilians informed Headquarters 15 Division of seeing enemy tanks all around them, Squadron was put on general alert, second-in-command

Major Nazir alerted the Squadron for possible move to Gujrat Strip, less one aircraft. Later, Major Nazir and Captain Askree flew around to find the truth, it was a false alarm. On 13th September Driver Dost Mohammad of 1 Squadron was shot fatally by the own guard commander, it was dark and with rumours of enemy paratroopers still in the air, guard commander challenged him and on not receiving the proper pass word, fired. Dost Mohammad was buried with full military honours. He was the only war casualty of Army Aviation.

Last Day of the War

At 0300 hours on 23rd September 1965, ceasefire was declared between Pakistan and India. It was a hectic day for all the three squadrons. Captain Jamil and Muazzam flew and landed at Khem Karan where 2 Squadron Flight was placed on a dusty strip, Captain Nagy took General Attique to Pasrur and back to Gujranwala, Captain Askaree evacuated Captain Nisar of Special Services Group from Narowal to Sialkot, he was wounded by a bullet. Colonel Babar and Major Tirmzi of 3 Squadron flew liaison sortie in 7 Division area. Pilots of 3 Squadron were still busy in evacuating casualties from Palangi.

Major Nazir, Captain Khalid Saeed and Captain Baig of 1 Squadron had narrow escape, while coming from Suchet Garh, they were short of fuel, and home-

base was covered in a layer of cloud. There was quite a gale blowing at Sialkot Strip when they landed. Perhaps an appropriate anti climax to the war.

War Ends but Aviation Support Continues

The war ended on 23rd September 1965 but the demand for aviation effort increased further for reconnaissance and liaison missions. That, however, was a piece of cake as compared to the flying in the heat of war, with all kinds of dangers looming around. All squadrons remained deployed till May 1966 performing assigned missions. In October 1965, Captain Khalid Saeed Janjua crashed in L-19 No. 016 at Adamke Strip while carrying out operational reconnaissance at 1640 hours and was severely injured.

First Use Of Two MI-4 Helicopters

The quantum of troops in Kashmir during and after the 1965 War, was almost doubled, particularly the Infantry Battalions and Artillery Regiments. Previously only a thin line of infantry troops with scarce artillery support was deployed on the cease fire line before the commencement of the conflict. The rapidly advancing autumn/winter season made logistic support a nightmare

for the commanders at all levels. Rations, ammunition for the troops and fodder for pack animals was essential. The transportation of ration, ammunition and fodder through porter-parties between the road heads and forward locations would only be a trickle. The logistic situation, particularly in Nelum, Jhelum Valleys, Bagh and Rawalakot Sectors was really desperate.

The story as narrated by brigadier retired Syed Mustanir Tirmizi, then a major, deserves to be told in his own words "While returning from a mission in Azad Kashmir in OH-13 helicopter, one late September evening, I spotted two Junkish looking large helicopters parked on the strip at Dhamial Airfield. After switching off my helicopter, I walked over to these machines out of sheer curiosity. I had not seen such helicopters during my Basic Helicopter Training in USA. In any case, our ally USA, had already put a ban on arms supply to Pakistan. I circled around the nearest helicopter. As compared to OH-13 it was a giant, a bit ugly looking and much rugged as compared to the American helicopters. On enquiring I was told that those were the Russian MI-4 helicopters belonging to Oil Gas Distribution Company (OGDC) and had been requisitioned by the Army. It did not arouse any enthusiasm or excitement in me as a pilot. I was wondering whether those ugly birds could ever take off and fly. Next morning the indomitable Lieutenant Colonel NUK Babar, introduced us to Mr. Bashar and

retired Flight Lieutenant Bokhari, the two Oil Gas Distribution Company pilots along with their co-pilots. A draconian order was issued to us i.e. Majors A L Awan, S L A Bokhari, Muhammad Naeem and myself, to fly and get acquainted with the two MI-4 helicopters, by local flying in Dhamial circuit for two days and then the next two days to be spent for the area familiarization of Oil Gas Distribution Company pilots in 1, 5 and 6 Sectors and as usual flight safety be damned. Army Aviation would not let down the men and animals located on the Line of Control. The actual logistic operations would start after four days. Such an order would have raised many eye brows under normal conditions but all of us were cognizant of the desperate logistic situation in AK where we were operating for the last couple of months.

Landing at Leepa Valley helipad was particularly a trying experience since it entailed spiraling down in tight cup shaped valley from ten thousand to seven thousand feet with trigger happy Indian infantry occupying the heights. The first trial landing was carried out very gingerly with thumping hearts. We, the squadron pilots, were in no position to control the helicopter, not being fully operational while sitting in the co-pilot seat. Our functions were confined to navigation and sweating only. All credit to Captains Bashar and Bokhari of Oil Gas Distribution Company, who completed this difficult transition with aplomb.”

“Needless to say, the mere appearance of two big helicopters was immensely morale boosting for the beleaguered troops. They were assured of their logistical sustenance during the next six winter months when road / porter operation would come to a halt due to snow. These two MI-4 helicopters provided the necessary logistic support admirably in four out of six AK Sectors. Bhimber and Kotli Sectors were relatively more accessible by existing road network. In addition, parachutes used to air drop supplies by the transport planes of the PAF and collected by the recipients, were also brought back for reuse from inaccessible areas.”

“Throughout the winter of 1965-66 we were busy like bees in logistic flight operations. Kel was to be supplied from Muzaffarabad, Leepa from Garhi Dopatta and Bagh, Rawalakot Sectors from Moong Bajri. As per the schedule worked out with Headquarters 12 Division, we would operate from Muzaffarabad, Garhi Dopatta and Moong Bajri, for ten to twelve days in rotation. By that time we had become fully operational on MI-4 helicopter. Hence after a farewell dinner in the Army Aviation Officer’s Mess, we relieved Basher and Bukhari and started independent operations with a skeleton Oil Gas Distribution Company maintenance crew.” Full credit goes to Lieutenant Colonel Babar who in his own style caught the bull by the horn and his officers who zealously and devotedly tamed it and undertook many

missions without any hesitation. Dumping operation was carried out from 30th October 1965 to February 1966 and following tonnage of ration and ammunition was lifted:-

Leepa	99 tons in 15 days
Kharsan Dhara	32 tons in 10 days
Dhok Panjal	25 tons in 15 days
Sheru ka Dhera	24 tons in 30 days
Kel	6 tons in 10 days
Kahuta Hajipir	8 tons in 4 days
Hajipir	2 tons in 2 days
Serai Hyderabad	6 tons in 6 days
Total	202 tons

Sadhewala Post- December 1965

When 1965 War ended, Pakistan was holding a sizeable chunk of Indian Territory, In the southern desert Pakistan Army along with Rangers had Kishengarh Fort, Tanot, Longanewala, Ghutara and area right down to Shahgarh. In the line of posts from Islamgarh to Ghultara being held by own Rangers, there was one post Sadhewala being held by Indians. Movement of troops from Longanewala to Tanot and Kishengarh thus

required long detours. That Indian post was getting reinforcement from Ramgarh.

L-19 Arrives in Sadhewala

On 20th October 1965 Captain Hamid Chaudhry and Captain Muazzam were ordered to fly from Gujranwala to Rahim Yar Khan and operate with the Rangers. They arrived there via Multan on the same day and reported to Headquarters Rangers. Rangers Force was commanded by Brigadier Khuda Dad {KD}. In the desert the ground movement was difficult and time consuming, therefore aerial recce proved to be very useful both in planning and execution phase of this operation. From 27th November 1965 onwards, Aviation effort was mainly diverted towards reconnaissance of Sadhewala. Officers of the Rangers and Infantry Battalion which were to take part in the attack were flown. They include Major Tariq Rasul {Father of Brigadier Arif Rasul}, Brigadier Khuda Dad, Lieutenant Colonel Majid, Lieutenant Colonel Talib and Lieutenant Colonel Toni Mahmood. Desert features present difficult perspective early morning and changes with passage of day and position of sun. Pilots flew early morning and then late in the afternoon, they also helped Rangers in making a sand model of the Sadhewala Post at their Headquarters. D-Day was fixed on 2nd December 1965.

1st December 1965

Three reconnaissance sorties were flown in the area. Withdrawl route from Sadhewala led to Ramgarh via Morgich Ka dera and Miraowala Tibba. The routes of the enemy as pointed by the Air OP were blocked by having blocking positions on the same night

D-Day 2nd December 1965

Captain Hamid Chaudhry writes: "A dawn attack was planned, I took off before first light. The flying time from Rahim Yar Khan to Sadhewala via Sandh was about 40 minutes. I was on target 20 minutes before the first light. As planned earlier, I started with an Artillery Shoot as part of pre H-hour bombardment.

Sadhewala Post was located in a large bowl of sand with high brims. Enemy was sitting on the high ground. By this time extensive flying had made me familiar with the area. Enemy was pinned down by own accurate artillery fire and own troops reached assaulting position. The moment own artillery fire was lifted the Indians were able to open heavy machine gun fire on our assaulting troops. I, from the air, guided the battalion of Lieutenant Colonel Toni to move behind the Sadhewala and reach the track, thus cutting off the withdrawal route. I had Lieutenant Colonel Majid with me in the L-19. Indians after some time, started

withdrawing, I could see them running back on camels, foot and in the lone jeep. But they were nipped by the battalion of Colonel Toni Mahmood. By 1000 hours the post had been captured.

Later I landed in the bowl of Sadhewala. The whole post was littered with dead bodies. Indian Post commander, Lieutenant Paraveen Kumar was captured he had a thick eye glasses. When one of our soldier tried to blind fold him, Paraveen Kumar said, "Just take the glasses off, without them, I am blind." I saw a dead body of a Second Lieutenant with his steel helmet lying on his side, inside the helmet was the photograph of a beautiful smiling girl."

Epilogue

. The War of 1965 with India was the first challenge faced by the Pakistan Army, so was the case with air arm of the army. L-19 were already here for last over six years and pilots were pretty confident about their operational use. OH-13 helicopters, however, were a recent acquisition and their appearance on the battlefield was to a large extent a surprise for even own soldiers. The pilots were not very experienced but the whole force entered the war with excellent frame of mind.

TASHKENT DECLARATION

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan, having met at Tashkent and having discussed the existing relations between India and Pakistan, hereby declare their firm resolve to restore normal and peaceful relations between their countries and to promote understanding and friendly relations between their peoples. They consider the attainment of these objectives of vital importance for the welfare of the 600 million people of India and Pakistan.

I

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan agree that both sides will exert all efforts to create good neighborly relations between India and Pakistan in accordance with the United Nations Charter. They reaffirm their obligation under the Charter not to have recourse to force and to settle their disputes through peaceful means. They considered that the interests of peace in their region and particularly in the Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent and, indeed, the interests of the people so India and Pakistan were not served by the continuance of tension between the two countries. It was against this background that Jammu and Kashmir was discussed, and each of the sides set forth its respective position.

II

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that all armed personnel of the two countries shall be withdrawn not later than 24 February, 1966, to the positions they held prior to 5 August, 1965, and both sides all observe the cease-fire terms on the cease-fire line.

III

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that relations between India and Pakistan shall be based on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of each other.

IV

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that both sides will discourage any propaganda directed against the other country, and will encourage propaganda which promotes the development of friendly relations between the two countries.

V

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that the High Commissioner of India to Pakistan and the High Commissioner of Pakistan to India will return to their posts and that the normal functioning of diplomatic missions of both countries will

be restored. Both Government shall observe the Vienna Convention of 1961 on Diplomatic Intercourse.

VI

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed to consider measures towards the restoration of economic and trade relations, communications, as well as cultural exchanges between India and Pakistan, and to take measures to implement the existing agreements between India and Pakistan.

VII

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that they will give instructions to their respective authorities to carry out the repatriation of the prisoners of war.

VIII

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that the two sides will continue the discussion of questions relating to the problems of refugees and eviction/illegal immigrations. They also agreed that both sides will create conditions which will prevent the exodus of people. They further agreed to discuss the return of the property and assets taken over by either side in connection with the conflict.

IX

The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that the two sides will continue meetings both at the highest and at other levels on matters of direct concern to both countries. Both sides have recognized the need to set up joint Indian-Pakistani bodies which will report to their Governments in order to decide what further steps should be taken. The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan recorded their feelings of deep appreciation and gratitude to the leaders of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Government and personally to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. for their constructive, friendly and noble part in bringing about the present meeting which has resulted in mutually satisfactory results. They also express to the Government and friendly people of Uzbekistan their sincere thankfulness for their overwhelming reception and generous hospitality. They invite the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. to witness this declaration.

10 January 1966

MAP

